

THE
DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH-WEST CANADA
BY THE
HUDSON'S BAY TRADE-ROUTE.

BY
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THE HUDSON'S BAY TRADE ROUTE.



SAVING IN

RAILWAY TRANSIT BY THE
HUDSON'S BAY ROUTE TO LIVERPOOL.

FROM WINNIPEG OVER MONTREAL	ROUTE 775 MILES.
FROM WINNIPEG OVER NEW YORK	ROUTE 1129 MILES.
FROM WINNIPEG OVER HALIFAX	ROUTE 1618 MILES.
FROM REGINA OVER MONTREAL	ROUTE 1081 MILES.
FROM REGINA OVER NEW YORK	ROUTE 1435 MILES.
FROM REGINA OVER HALIFAX	ROUTE 1924 MILES.

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WHILE many minds are directed to the solution of the problems affecting the great population of these islands and arising out of its rapid increase, those enterprises which provide immediate work and offer fresh inducements to permanent settlement in a new country are worthy of serious consideration.

The writer of the following pages claims for the development of the Hudson's Bay Route that it will comply with these conditions; and surely the time is opportune when on this side the population is increasing at the rate of nearly 1,000 per day, without any corresponding increase in the trade of the country, and on the other side of the Atlantic there is a territory within the Queen's dominions, and full of home friends and associations, which has been well described by Sir George Stephen, the Chairman of the Canadian Pacific Railway, as "another Russian Empire waiting for population."

It is to bring our surplus population in contact with that great territory that the route is to be opened. The fact of starting it will lead to cargoes of steel rails and other British manufactures being conveyed by sea direct to Port Nelson, and to the employment of English labourers in the formation of the line. These men will find work and supplies waiting for them, and it will be contrary to past experience if they do not permanently settle in the country and induce their friends at home to follow them. Hitherto the vested interests of the Hudson's Bay Company have barred the way. So long since as 1749 that Company had acquired an unenviable reputation as monopolists, for in that year petitions were presented to Parliament from the leading cities and towns of England complaining of the undue exercise of their rights by keeping out traders and shutting up the country—rights derived from a charter which had been granted to the Company, and which practically gave them a monopoly of the trade of the larger part of the North American Continent.

The Marquis of Lorne, the late Governor-General of Canada,

has said in effect* of the Great North West, that to within the last few years,

Courteous as were the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, not one of them could be found who would not deprecate the idea of "opening the country for settlement." They could not foresee that a favourable bargain for the Company would be made in reference to their lands, and they only looked upon an immigrant invasion as the expulsion of the fur-bearing animals which alone afforded a good trade.

Had they been able to prophesy they would have welcomed the tide of the white races whose advent would enhance a thousand-fold the value of the as yet useless grass ocean around them. But the Hudson's Bay Company's people had had enough trouble in years long past with their competitors, and, having procured a monopoly, they did not desire neighbours. So it was said that grain would not grow; that even roots were difficult to raise. Who knew if the virgin soil was worth the plough? Such was the language industriously employed. But Lord Selkirk had persuaded some of the Highlanders who at the beginning of the century thronged so eagerly to the emigrant vessels to sail into Hudson's Bay and to ascend the Nelson River and to settle to the south of Lake Winnipeg, where they formed a most flourishing colony. Then, again, the Americans higher up the Red River had found the valley most fertile, with a soil marvellously black and rich, and it became evident that vast wheat-fields had been hidden away in that dim green north land.

To-day all this is changed. The great Prairie of the North-Western States of America has become a vast farm, and in Canada the province of Manitoba, and the whole country beyond to British Columbia, has been opened up by the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the pioneer city of Winnipeg is now reached in Pullman cars in fewer hours than it occupied weeks in 1870 for Colonel (now Lord) Wolseley's Red River Expedition to march along the same route to Fort Garry.

The fertile territory may be taken to extend over an area of at least 270,000 square miles, and of this great domain the Canadian Government have appointed one twentieth of each township to the Hudson's Bay Company in satisfaction of their monopoly.

The Hudson's Bay Company has thus an aggregate quantity of about eight million acres, which is spread over the whole area, and has a direct and substantial interest in its rapid development by the construction of railways for its colonization and settlement.

There remains another great Corporation, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Their line crosses the fertile territory from East to West, a length of 900 miles, at an average distance of seventy miles from the southern frontier, and has attached to it a strip of land twenty-four miles wide on each side called "the railway belt," with an area of 32,000,000 acres. If this land were but half under cultivation the traffic would require the service of a greater number of trains per day than the existing single line could accommodate, and would be a very severe strain upon a double one.

Such is the prairie character of the country, the extraordinary rapidity with which the land is taken up and can be developed,

* *Good Words*, February 1886.

and the facility with which it lends itself to settlement, that it may be reasonably expected to become the home of numbers of our surplus population, and, in a very short time, the backbone of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

From Winnipeg (fifteen years old), the largest town in the North West, to Calgary, lying under the lee of the Rocky Mountains, where it has had yet scarcely a three-years' existence, there are villages and towns springing up all along the line of 900 miles—Brandon, for example, which had no existence in 1881, has now a population of 3,000, and is a most important centre.

Winnipeg, the *point d'appui* of Lord Wolseley's Red River Expedition, contained, in 1871, but 350 inhabitants, and has now above 25,000. It is well laid out, with regular streets, in no case less than 66 feet wide. The main street is 132 feet in width, over two miles in length, paved with wood, and is fitted up with tramway and electric light. The town has the telephone, gas, water, sewers, handsome public and private buildings, a good club, university, churches, and last, but not least, enjoyable society. It is prepared for, and expects, a large increase as a centre on which will converge the traffic from British Columbia, on the West, from the United States on the South, and from the lines made, and to be made, for the more complete accommodation of the great North-West.

Winnipeg is, therefore, and is likely to remain, the capital and mart of the country comprised in the "railway belt," and beyond; and the only outlet from it to the east is the Canadian Pacific Railway, which is thus secured a heavy traffic.

One of the lines authorized is the Winnipeg and Hudson's Bay Railway, which runs north from Winnipeg to Port Nelson, on Hudson's Bay, and excites the keenest interest, not only in Manitoba, but throughout the North-West Territory, to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and even southwards, in the States of Minnesota, Dakota, and Montana. It will serve the double purpose of assisting in the settlement of those regions, which are not yet within the influence of railways, and of providing a new outlet and a shorter route for the exchange of produce between Great Britain and North-West Canada. This is the old Hudson's Bay Trade route, which alone gives access to the north, while the Canadian Pacific Railway provides for the south of the fertile territory. This route it is now the earnest desire of the Manitobans to improve, by constructing the Hudson's Bay Railway to connect with the existing railways, and the great waterways of the country, and by substituting ocean steamships for sailing vessels.

The line, which has a total length of about 950 miles, has been authorized by the Canadian Parliament, and includes a branch of

300 miles to the westward, in the direction of the Pacific Ocean, which will be reached by running over the Canadian Pacific Railway (see Map). Moreover, the Government has reserved a magnificent area of 8,400,000 acres from the Crown lands adjoining the railway, as a subsidy or free gift; and, further, as evidence of the keen interest with which the undertaking is regarded in the North-West, the Provincial Parliament of Manitoba has granted a bonus of £200,000 to assist in its execution.

And here it may be well to consider why such facilities should be offered by the Canadian authorities to bring about the rapid completion of this important work. Fortunately, the cause is not far to seek. The fertile North-West, with all its advantages, has one disadvantage in being more remote than the rest of Canada from the Atlantic seaboard. Many intending settlers are thus detained and induced to settle in the eastern provinces. The communication with the mother country is less direct, and the cost of transport is greatly enhanced by a continuous railway journey of some 1,800 miles after reaching the Port of Montreal. Although travelling is made comfortable and cheap, the first-class fare being only about one penny per mile, it is sufficiently tedious and expensive to deter a new arrival from going farther west, especially when the more favoured inhabitants of the east are offering him their best inducements to settle with them; and for goods traffic, however good the road and economical the working of it, the cost of carriage by land must always greatly exceed that by sea, to say nothing of the fatigue and consequent shrinkage and loss of cattle in long railway journeys.

The effect of the Hudson's Bay Route when opened up by the improved internal communication afforded by this railway, will be to add little to the sea voyage, and to reduce the railway carriage enormously. Here, then, we have the reason why the Canadian and Provincial Governments have offered the facilities already described, and why every farmer, stock-breeder, and inhabitant of the North-West looks forward with eagerness to the realisation of his hopes in the direction of Hudson's Bay.

The distances by sea are :—

	Geographical miles.
From New York to Liverpool	3,100
„ Montreal „ <i>viâ</i> Belle Isle . . .	2,787
„ „ „ <i>viâ</i> Cape Race	2,990
„ Port Nelson (Hudson's Bay) to Liverpool . . .	2,996

And the distances by rail are :—

	Miles.
From Winnipeg to New York	1,779
„ „ Montreal	1,425

	Miles.
From Winnipeg to Port Nelson (Hudson's Bay) .	650
„ Regina to New York	2,135
„ „ Montreal	1,781
„ „ Port Nelson (Hudson's Bay) .	700

Whilst the difference in the sea voyage is evidently unimportant, the saving in railway carriage by the Hudson's Bay route is very marked, and is—

	Saving in miles.
From Winnipeg <i>viâ</i> New York	1,129
„ „ „ Montreal	775
„ Regina „ New York	1,435
„ „ „ Montreal	1,081

Regina is the capital of the North-West Territory and the centre of the great wheat-growing belt of land, and it is estimated that the saving in the cost of transport of wheat thence to Liverpool, which will be effected by the Hudson's Bay route, will amount to 5s. per quarter. Similarly for cattle, it is estimated that the saving will be from £3 to £4 per head.

These figures should serve to draw the traffic from whatever sources may be available, and when it is considered what these are the importance of the proposed railway will be evident. Not only Manitoba and the North-West Territories of Canada, but the adjoining States of Minnesota, Dakota, Montana, and Washington Territory will find by it the cheapest and shortest outlet to Europe for the produce from their wheat lands and cattle ranches.

Moreover, the saving in distance from Regina applies to British Columbia, China, and Japan.

The quantity of wheat produced by the States of Minnesota and Dakota is about ten million quarters per annum, and the surplus crop of wheat in Manitoba available for export is about 400,000 quarters, and is rapidly increasing. As to cattle, it is estimated from last years "round up" that in Alberta alone there are at least 80,000 head. In 1885 the number of cattle exported from Canada to Britain was 144,000, and as the cattle ranches of the North West are developed the trade will undoubtedly acquire much greater importance.*

There are also sources of traffic of a less ambitious character, such as the produce of the rich agricultural and timber regions through which the line runs, and the communication which it will establish between Hudson's Bay and the Canadian and American markets.

The Americans have, for a quarter of a century, carried on a

* See article in the *National Review*, March 1886, on the "Newer North-West for Englishmen."

very profitable whale fishery in Hudson's Bay, and there are porpoise, walrus, salmon, and trout fisheries in existence, besides coal, iron, and other minerals, capable of speedy development as soon as the present inefficient means of internal communication are superseded by a railway which will connect with the railway system of the United States, *via* Winnipeg, and with the artery of Canada—the Canadian Pacific Railway.

It is conceded by all who know the district, and has been ascertained by actual survey, that the country is well adapted to the construction of a cheap line, and that Port Nelson, on Hudson's Bay, will admit ocean steamships.

The same unanimity of opinion among disinterested persons may be said to prevail as to the navigation of Hudson's Bay and Strait. For 276 years they have been traversed by sailing vessels of various classes, from the boat of the whaler to the ship of war, and for almost every year during the past century and a half they have been visited by the vessels of the Hudson's Bay Company, without any but the most trifling loss.

Had not the Hudson's Bay route been feasible, the Company's traders would have fared badly, for they depended upon it for their home supplies, and generally as the only established means of communication with Great Britain until the recent introduction of railways. Nor was this a small matter, for the Company had formerly numerous centres of trade, which were planted over most of the northern part of the Continent, and extended for several hundred miles south of the Canadian boundary, and of these there is still a goodly residue in the 175 trading posts now existing in the Dominion of Canada.

Their system of communication comprised an interior and an ocean navigation; and York Factory, within a few miles of Port Nelson, was the point of exchange between the two.

To and from this point the trade with the interior was carried on chiefly by the waterways of the country, near to one of which part of the proposed line of railway runs till they both reach Lake Winnipeg, distant some 300 miles from Hudson's Bay.

Lake Winnipeg is the reservoir which receives the waters from one of the largest water-sheds in the world, embracing several important rivers, *e.g.* the great Saskatchewan river, with a drainage area of some 300,000 square miles of fertile territory, which, stretching to the Rocky Mountains, is navigated by large steamers for 1,000 miles, and many of its branches are navigable.

The Red river, which runs northward to Lake Winnipeg from as far south as Fargo in the United States, is also navigable. Its valley is now well settled, and possesses, for a length of 600 miles, probably the richest soil in the world.

The Assiniboine river, which is tributary to the Red river, is also navigable for 300 miles.

Over this immense area the "York boats" of the Company (so called from York Factory) were well known, and were recognized as the best means of internal communication until they were supplanted by steamers and large cargo-boats, and York Factory itself, after the introduction of railways, came to be no longer the base of supply.

It cannot be denied that these waterways constitute a network which will act as a feeder to the proposed railway, and will not compete with it.

On the landward side of York Factory, therefore, the whole of the old communications of the Hudson's Bay Company will be utilized where suitable, and, where not suitable to modern progress, they will be superseded by better routes and later methods.

Seaward of York Factory the conditions affecting the navigation of Hudson's Bay and Strait resolve themselves into the period during which the Strait is open for navigation, for the temperature of the waters of Hudson's Bay in summer compares favourably with that of the water of Lake Superior, and the latter is a fresh-water lake, while the former is salt water and tidal.

A Select Committee of the House of Commons of Canada, appointed to inquire into the navigation of Hudson's Bay, reported in April 1884 that the above difference in temperature was 14° , and Lieutenant A. R. Gordon, R.N., who commanded the expedition sent out by the Canadian Government in 1884, in the steamship *Neptune*, reported, as the result of his observations on the surface temperatures in the bay, that "Hudson's Bay may, therefore, be regarded as a vast basin of comparatively warm water, the effect of which must be to considerably ameliorate the winter climate to the south and east of it."

From the tables given to the Government by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1880 it appears that at York Factory, for a period of fifty-three years, the breaking up of the ice in the river occurred early enough to give an average of five months or thereabouts of navigation; and the evidence goes to show that Port Nelson opens even earlier, that Hudson's Bay itself is never frozen except for a fringe of several miles from the shore, and that the period of open navigation at Port Nelson approximates to that at Montreal, where the value of the exports and imports exceeds £16,000,000 sterling. In short, there is a consensus of opinion in favour of the perfect feasibility of the navigation of Hudson's Bay.

Of Hudson's Strait the Committee of the House of Commons before referred to reported:—

Were it not for the presence of the polar ice which comes down from the great

Arctic seas by way of Fox Strait during the months of April, June, and July, Hudson's Strait would, it is admitted by all, be exceptionally safe, owing to the uniform great depth of water, and the entire absence of reefs or dangerous islands.

And again:—

We find that the great majority of those who have been there, and consequently who know, reckon the duration of navigation in these waters at three and four months.

For more than two hundred and fifty years sailors have counted upon having an uninterrupted navigation of from two and a half months to three months, *and this without marine charts, without an accurate knowledge of these waters, without lighthouses, without a system of telegraphic communication, and without the aid of steam.* It is not, then, an unwarranted belief, that with all the appliances now at the disposal of nautical science, this navigation will be prolonged for some weeks.

The Report goes on to contrast the St. Lawrence in 1716, when its navigation was described as the most difficult and treacherous of all known countries, with its now magnificent harbours and powerful and numerous fleet, and concludes by remarking upon the absolutely impartial character of the labours of the Committee.

Following upon this Report the Canadian Government sent out an expedition in the same year (1884) in the steamship *Neptune*, a Newfoundland sealing vessel of 684 tons, which was the first *steamer* that ever entered the Bay. She conveyed scientific observers to various points in the Strait, where they passed the winter until relieved by the expedition of 1885 which proceeded there on board H.M.S. *Alert*, of 700 gross tons, and fifty horse-power.

The Reports of Lieutenant Gordon, R.N., commanding the two expeditions, show a period of navigation of four months each season. The officers in charge of the observing stations were instructed to note the movements of the ice, and of these Mr. Laperriere, who was stationed at the western end of the Strait, reports that the local ice formed on the 23rd October 1884, but that low fogs were seen throughout the winter, "sure sign of open water."

On the 11th February 1885, the drift ice wholly disappeared, and there was open water for two days, "and the same thing occurred again from the 2nd to 4th March."

For a month from May 15th to June 13th, 1884, no ice was visible. On the 13th June it returned, but was so slack as to be easily navigable by steamships, and it finally disappeared early in July. Mr. Ashe, Superintendent of the Quebec Observatory, who was in charge of a station on the North Coast about midway through the Strait, reports:—

All winter through, whenever the wind prevailed from the north-east to the north-west, it would open a channel along my shore, varying from a mile to four miles in width, showing thus the extent of open water that had been previously distributed among the floes.

Speaking of channels thus formed by the winds, he says:—

I would instance how the *Alert* this season struggled with the ice on the north shore, whilst I could see from my station perfectly open water twenty miles or less off shore.

and I concluded that for six weeks previously, at least, there was a perfectly feasible channel, free of ice, on the south shore, for any class of vessel.

An ocean steamship with ordinary steam-power would have no difficulty in penetrating ice slack enough to form these channels, besides which the width of the strait, from forty-five to eighty miles, would permit a ship crossing from one side to the other to take advantage of such open water.

Mr. Ashe concludes by expressing his firm belief that the Strait is navigable for from four and a half to six and a half months at least.

Much further evidence on this subject could be easily adduced; suffice it to say here that Lieutenant Gordon, in his Report of 1884, says: "The ice has been supposed hitherto to be the most formidable barrier to the navigation of the Straits, but its terror disappears to a great extent under investigation"; and he further says that, had he been making the passage direct instead of coasting and working across the Strait, as he had to do in order to establish the observing stations at various points on each side of the Strait, he does not consider that he would have been delayed by ice more than forty-eight hours.

Moreover, he found as the result of comparative meteorological observations that in the character of the weather for the two months (August and September), so far as it affects navigation, Hudson's Straits compare favourably with the Straits of Belle Isle, there being eleven heavy gales at Belle Isle against three in Hudson's Straits, and more than double the amount of fog.

The Report of Lieutenant Gordon for 1885 says, in effect, that the reports of the observers stationed by him in Hudson's Straits in 1884, go to show that the navigation would probably have been closed for eight months in 1884 and 1885, and that the movements of the ice in the spring of the latter year were much later than those of the former.

He concludes by saying, on the information of a captain who had made a number of "voyages through Hudson's Straits, and had seen them clear of ice in June, that the fact that the Straits have been clear at this time shows that there is great variability in the dates of the opening of navigation"; the inference being that, as he had himself encountered an exceptionally unfavourable condition of the ice, the effect of variability would be to increase the period of open water beyond what he had met with, rather than to reduce it.

That the mere circumstance of variability in the season does not constitute a bar to navigation or to the development of trade, can be shown by a reference to the Baltic ports, which are very uncertain. Riga, especially, is often closed from October to April;

but, on the other hand, has been known to be open all the year round; and the value of its trade may be appreciated by the fact that in 1883 the exports and imports amounted to £3,679,000 sterling.

Other important ports in Europe could be mentioned to prove that an annual close season is not confined to places on the sea-board of Canada, and is not inconsistent with good trade where the communications with the interior of the country are favourable. Even in the south there are ports on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azoff, among which may be instanced Odessa, where, under local influences, a severity of climate occurs in the winter which is remarkable at such a latitude. Odessa is frequently frozen up during the winter, yet in 1883 the value of its exports and imports amounted to £12,447,000 sterling.

The most northerly point of Europe—that of Archangel—is closed for eight months of the year, and is subject during the navigable season to many disadvantages, among which are the nature of the channel by which the port is approached, for the safe navigation of which trained pilots, aided by a system of signalling, are required; the capricious weather; and the prevalence of fogs. Yet, in spite of such hindrances, an extensive and regular traffic, consisting largely of grain, is carried on in quantities regulated, not by the consideration of hindrances to navigation, but by questions of internal communications, the improvement of which would probably at once develop the traffic of the port in the face of a class of difficulties which are formidable only in the eyes of the inexperienced. The average annual total of shipping cleared from Archangel in the five years ending 1878 was 156,000 tons, in 500 vessels, the value of the exports being estimated at £1,000,000 sterling.

The history of Hudson's Bay in relation to the subject of this paper is instructive, and may be easily told. After the period of discoveries which commenced in 1610, came the first establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670.

From that date until the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the Bay became the theatre of sanguinary conflicts; many a hero there won fame for deeds renowned in story; the navies of England and France made it the field of many a fight, and the forts on its shores were time and again taken and retaken, so that Iberville, writing to the King, said to him, "Sire, je suis las de conquérir la Baie." The Treaty of Utrecht confirmed England in possession of Hudson's Bay and the adjoining countries, and a gloomy silence fell once more upon those lands. *

Thus the Hudson's Bay Company acquired their monopoly, and obtained quiet enjoyment of their trade-route to York Factory *via* Hudson's Bay and Strait, which, as has been already shown, formed their line of communication. A century and a

* Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, 1884.

half ago, "the navigation of these unknown seas was characterized as safe and comparatively easy," "and if the number of vessels sent out by the Company is less in our time, it is because since the establishment of railways to the south of Manitoba it costs them less to export by this route a great portion of the goods that they formerly despatched by way of Moose or York Factory,* *viâ* Hudson's Bay.

The writer has ventured to quote much from the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, because he believes it to have been undertaken without reference to preconceived opinions, and at a time when the subject was even less trammelled by vested interests than it now is.

Convinced that the navigation of Hudson's Bay and Strait has been proved to be feasible, and may be found easy when worked by modern methods and supplemented by improved internal communications; satisfied, also, from a personal knowledge of the country, that the rapid settlement of the Great North-West of Canada is earnestly to be desired in the interests alike of that colony and the mother country, he advocates the development of the old Hudson's Bay trade-route as a work "which will assure to Canada a fresh pledge of prosperity and grandeur."

* Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, 1884.



